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NJMC THROWS DOWN THE GREEN GAUNTLET

Meadowlands Challenges Promotes Energy Efficiency Among Area Businesses

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) is pleased to announce the kickoff of the Meadowlands Challenge, a fun and friendly competition designed to promote energy efficiency, increase recycling efforts and help address the causes of Global Warming within the Meadowlands District.

The challenge encourages District businesses to examine their energy use and recycling practices and find ways to improve performance in these areas. Companies that make the greatest strides within a year will be recognized as green leaders. The Commission is also leading by example: the NJMC recently completed an energy audit and is taking steps to reduce consumption, increase paper and metal recycling, and encourage employees to find other ways to reduce their carbon footprints.

“The NJMC is a leader in proactively pursuing energy initiatives that will improve the environment and foster economic growth in the Meadowlands,” said Joseph Doria, Chairman of the NJMC and Commissioner of the state Department of Community Affairs. “Bringing others into this process through the Meadowlands Challenge - and showing that economic growth and environmental protection are complementary rather than adversarial goals - is a natural next step.”

Commissioner Doria will help kick off the Challenge during a speech at the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce’s Eggs and Issues Breakfast on Dec. 2 at La Reggia Restaurant in Secaucus. The Chamber has also partnered with the NJMC to encourage businesses to get involved in the competition and will maintain a list of companies that join the competition.

Participating businesses will be asked to start with their own energy audit and then to develop a list of goals and action items for increasing efficiency. They will then compete against themselves to reach these goals; those who see the greatest percentage in energy

reduction will be awarded prizes. Possible benchmarks include increasing the variety and amount of recyclables collected, turning off computers and printers, and promoting mass transportation. Commission staff will be available to assist companies in setting their parameters and goals, and techniques will be shared among the group to maximize the overall benefits.

At the NJMC, this Challenge involved a switch from incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs in its administration building and Meadowlands Environment Center at the Commission's DeKorte Park campus. Motion-sensitive light switches and an expanded recycling policy will soon follow. The NJMC has also partnered with a Trenton-based company, Terracycle, that collects specific products – certain juice pouches and candy wrappers – to be made into other items in a process called “upcycling,” and provides a donation for educational programs in return. In addition, the Commission sponsored a shuttle bus that links workers with the Lyndhurst train station and is encouraging employees to find other ways to conserve energy at work.

“There are so many ways that businesses can reduce energy consumption, and many are neither complicated nor costly,” said Robert Ceberio, Executive Director of the NJMC. “Through the Meadowlands Challenge we look forward to seeing business owners and employees take pride in helping the environment while cutting costs and in some cases increasing revenue.”

The Commission also aims to spread the green word to members of the public. Through the Meadowlands Environment Center, the NJMC is holding classes on green shopping. Next year, the NJMC hopes to take its energy conservation message on the road with workshops at libraries, senior centers and schools. Other topics will include saving energy at home and proper recycling.

Saving energy isn't a new concept for the Meadowlands Commission. Last spring the NJMC opened a new science center that was constructed with green-building practices and relies largely on alternative energy. The agency offers financial incentives to developers who use similar techniques in District projects. Two decades ago the Commission began siphoning methane gas from its landfills to make electricity, and it is now working on a combined alternative energy project that could include the state's largest solar panel display.

Businesses interested in participating in the Challenge should contact the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce at 201-939-0707 or office@meadowlands.org.

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